

# Public Document Pack



Hinckley & Bosworth  
Borough Council

**Bill Cullen** MBA (ISM), BA(Hons) MRTPI  
*Chief Executive*

**Date: 30 January 2024**

**To: All Members of Council**

Dear Councillor,

Please see overleaf a supplementary agenda for the meeting of the **COUNCIL** on **TUESDAY, 30 JANUARY 2024 at 6.30 pm.**

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R Owen'.

Rebecca Owen  
Democratic Services Manager

## COUNCIL - 30 JANUARY 2024

### SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA

#### 6. QUESTIONS

To deal with questions under Council Procedure Rule number 14.

##### (a) **From Councillor Boothby to the Executive member for Planning**

“Will the Executive member for Planning please confirm the number of planning applications at or beyond their decision date, the number of applications currently in hand awaiting validation, the current five year housing land supply figure for this council and the average time over the last six months between receipt of an application to it being validated and visible on the planning portal?”

Response from Councillor Crooks:

“Thank you for your question, in response:

- Total number of applications pending consideration = 269
- Total number of applications pending consideration and over eight weeks since validation = 122 (note, this figure does not take account that a high number of these will have extensions of time agreed with the applicant)
- Total number of applications awaiting validation = 11
- Current five year housing land supply figure = 4.89 years as of 31 March 2022
- Average time for validation of applications in past 12 months = less than five working days (note, the question refers to receipt and validation, not all applications are valid on receipt, instead with requests for payment of the correct fee or required submission of relevant plans or documents needed before an application is valid).”

##### (b) **From Councillor Boothby to the Executive member for Planning**

“What quality control and assurance processes are in place to ensure that documents are accurately uploaded to applications on the planning portal?”

Response from Councillor Crooks:

“Applications are validated by planning support staff and planning assistants who are trained on validation of planning applications. Recent training has been undertaken (December 2023) as a refresher on validation.”

##### (c) **From Councillor Boothby to the Executive member for Planning**

“In light of the recent report from Leicestershire County Council highlighting that HBBC is the only district in the county failing to meet its housing delivery targets, what steps are being considered and implemented to resolve this situation?”

Response from Councillor Crooks:

“We are not aware of any such report from the county council. However we assume that the question refers to the housing delivery test (HDT). The housing delivery test 2022 measurement was published on 19 December 2023 and is an annual measurement of housing delivery in the area of relevant plan-making authorities, looking back over the previous three financial years – 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22. The council has a HDT figure of 89%, an increase from a previous figure of 86%, and is required to produce an action plan six months from the date of publication (June 2024). This has previously been undertaken in June 2022 following publication of the previous HDT results.

We are surprised that the county council would be commissioning such reports when their own record of delivery on the services they should be providing is so poor. With our roads crumbling, huge problems in SEND transport, bus services being slashed and total failure to deliver the fair funding they have campaigned for for over a decade, it might be advisable for them to put their own house in order.”

(d) **From Councillor Sutton to the Executive member for Planning**

“I was recently informed that the borough must allow a certain amount of self-build properties per annum for local people. Please confirm if this is correct and how many such properties have received planning permission and been completed in the last five years”.

Response from Councillor Crooks

“I can confirm that the Self-build and Custom Housebuilding Act 2015 (as amended by the Housing and Planning Act 2016 and the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023) requires that we must give development permission for the carrying out of self-build and custom housebuilding on enough serviced plots of land to meet the demand for self-build and custom housebuilding in the Hinckley & Bosworth area in respect of each base period.

Under the Act, we are responsible for keeping a self-build and custom housebuilding register. The level of demand is established by reference to the number of entries added to our register during a base period (covering October to October each year). At the end of each base period, we have three years in which to permission and equivalent number of plots of land, which are for self-build and custom housebuilding as there are entries for that base period.

We have permitted nine dwellings for self-build or custom housebuilding up to 30 October 2022, however please note that we are yet to monitor the most recent base period of 31 October 2022 to 30 October 2023 which will be completed in the coming months in accordance with the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities’ data return requests.”

(e) **From Councillor Cook to the Executive member for Planning**

“What is the current position of the updated local development plan and is the council aware of any issues that may delay its adoption?”

Is there any information or actions which this council is awaiting from Leicestershire County Council to enable progress on the LDP? If so, please confirm what information or actions remain outstanding and when it was requested”.

Response from Councillor Crooks:

“The Local Development Scheme (LDS) has been updated and will be published online imminently. The LDS proposes the following next stages for the local plan:

- Completion of outstanding evidence December 2022 – February 2025
- Public consultation on draft plan (regulation 18) June – July 2024
- Public consultation on submission draft plan (regulation 19) January – February 2025
- Submission to Secretary of State (Regulation 22) by 30 June 2025
- Estimated date for examination September 2025 to November 2025
- Programmed date for adoption January / February 2026.

This council is engaged with Leicestershire County Council for a number of evidence documents, including the South Leicestershire Joint Transport Study. This work is ongoing and across two stages, with each stage to inform the regulation 18 and regulation 19 consultation documents as mentioned above.

The council has previously sought engagement with the county council on highways evidence to support the local plan as far back as 2018. This was hampered by the exorbitant cost proposals from the county council and the long length of time in order for them to undertake the work. This led to HBBC asking the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to assist intervening with the county council. I am pleased to report that joint evidence, as set out, is now underway.”

(f) **From Councillor C Allen to the Leader of Council**

“Will the Leader please confirm what discussions have taken place and plans agreed to manage the potential closure of the A5 over Easter, as part of the railway bridge works?”

How will this be communicated to local residents and road users from further afield, given this work is scheduled for one of the busiest holiday periods?”

Response from Councillor Bray:

“Leicestershire County Council is the highways authority and National Highways manages trunk roads like the A5. I’ll be happy to refer Cllr Allen’s question to those authorities.

If/when we are made aware of closures for the work, we will share the information via our usual channels, including social media.

At present, if the A5 is closed at this location, traffic is re-routed via Nuneaton, not via Hinckley.”

## 8. **LEADER OF THE COUNCIL'S POSITION STATEMENT**

“Welcome to my first Leader’s statement of the New Year. Whilst it seems a little late, I would like to extend my New Year wishes to you all. As you have a full agenda tonight, I will keep this statement relatively brief.

### **50 year anniversary celebrations**

The Council celebrates its 50 year anniversary this year and we plan to mark this with a series of special events. We intend to celebrate with an exhibition at Atkins Gallery, as well as a young person conference and tree planting across the borough.

A highlight will be a one-off dedicated Party in the Park to commemorate the anniversary, which will take place at Hollycroft Park on 25 May. The event will feature music, food and activities for the whole family. We are encouraging residents to check the council website and social media channels for further updates.

We have also reached out to find any businesses that are celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary as well as residents celebrating 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversaries, which we want to recognise, or whether they were born in the borough fifty years ago.

This is an incredible milestone which we want to celebrate with our communities and businesses.

### **Spring and summer events**

As you would expect, officers have been working on developing our events calendar which will start in earnest in April with St Georges Day, with events being programmed throughout the summer. Look out for further information in our forthcoming Borough Bulletin.

### **Planning performance**

The council’s planning team continue to out-perform government targets with over 80% of applications being determined within eight weeks or within agreed timeframes. However, the government measures average performance for minor applications over a two-year rolling period, which is now 62%. This is just short of the 70% target and, as a result, DLUHC has written to the council to request information on performance for minor applications. I am pleased to say that this is up from this time last year at 46% for the two-year average and is due to exceed the 70% target from April this year, a level of improvement that puts us within the top five councils nationally.

As members will know, the council has previously been open about the severe staffing issues in its planning team in late 2020 until September 2022, which came at a time when planning applications were at an all-time high. The council now performs consistently above the government's performance thresholds for both minor and major applications and has done since October 2022. As well as this, over 80% of all minor applications have been turned around within target times since January 2023, well above the government's target of 70%.

The council's Chief Executive has now written to senior DLUHC officials demonstrating our commitment to continuous improvement and to provide evidence of our planning performance above national targets. We are confident from April that, even taking the two year rolling average which DLUHC measure councils on, we will exceed national targets.

I would like to thank our officers for the tremendous work they have undertaken to secure this improved performance.

### **Leisure centre carbon reduction project funding**

I am delighted to confirm and "hot off the press" today, that we have secured £120,000 funding from Sport England towards a solar project to assist in the energy efficiency of Hinckley Leisure Centre. I would like to express my thanks to officers for securing this funding which will support the council's objectives of reducing our carbon footprint in the borough.

### **Mitigating impact on communities from construction sites**

Last week the council issued a press release highlighting a warning over the potential service of a community protection order on the developers of the Big Pit, Hinckley. This is the result of ongoing issues of mud on the roads surrounding the Ashby Road building site.

This was a site granted permission by a government inspector following the refusal of planning permission over concerns about access to the site and fears the area was prone to flooding.

The council's enforcement team has issued a community protection warning letter requiring the developer to ensure that wheel washing facilities that they have in place are operated effectively in order to keep the road clear of mud. This warning requires the developer to ensure road sweepers are used regularly and particularly when earth is being moved around the site and it instructs the developer to create a hard surfaced area for contractors' vehicles and site visitors to further limit transfer of mud to the road.

Should the situation not improve, the council can serve a community protection notice (CPN) and non-compliance with it carries a criminal sanction and can lead to a criminal record. It can also lead to fines, seizure and forfeiture of items, default works and recovering of costs.

We have also informed Leicestershire County Council, as the highway authority, who have their own powers to address these matters on highways.

I have asked officers to explore that all new major development sites that are granted permission have appropriate conditions attached to secure the appropriate level of on and off site vehicle and road cleaning facilities and regimes to mitigate the impacts of construction works on local communities.

My administration is determined to ensure that developers do keep to the important conditions that are imposed and will be taking further tough action on other developers who seek to flout the rules.

### **Finance settlement**

On 24 January the government announced additional funding of £600m towards the final local government finance settlement. We are yet to be advised what this means to us and indeed what the extra cash will be. On initial assessment it is very likely not to be much, given the focus of the majority of this increase will go towards upper tier authorities for social care responsibilities. The full impact of the settlement will be discussed alongside the budget at this week's scrutiny meeting and at Council in February.

Whilst any extra funding is welcome, it is of course only a sticking plaster over the fundamental problems of local government finance. Despite repeated promises for over a decade, the government has failed to deliver on the fair funding it has promised.

### **Economic functions and Leicester & Leicestershire Enterprise Partnership (LLEP) transition**

At a meeting of local authority leaders across Leicestershire and Rutland this week, we will be discussing progress over transitional arrangements of LLEP powers and activities along with engagement of districts and businesses in the new governance arrangements. Last year the government confirmed the local enterprise partnerships' core functions – namely business representation, local economic planning and delivery of government programmes where directed – should, from April 2024, be delivered by local authorities.

Outside of areas that have devolution deals, it is expected that these functions will be exercised by upper tier authorities as appropriate, ensuring effective engagement with districts, businesses and other key stakeholders.

Members will be aware of the economic role we play and the priority we have given this work in our corporate and economic strategies. This council has undertaken significant work with partners in attracting inward investment generating new jobs and skills to the borough for the benefit of our residents. Mira Technology Park and Hinckley Business Park are two key examples of this in recent years. I, along with my district leader colleagues, will be seeking to ensure we have appropriate representation in the new economic arrangements and on the

new economic board that will be created to oversee the work and priorities transitioned from the LLEP.

### **Proposed health facilities, Hinckley**

Plans for the new community diagnostic centre in Hinckley will be considered at our February meeting of Planning Committee. This is welcome, if not long overdue, and will provide a marginal increase in services in a new modern building.

Part of the plan involves relocating the physiotherapy service to the Hinckley Hub as part of a new partnership arrangement between the council and NHS locally.

We have been informed that removal of the porta cabin building will be taking place imminently.

We now wait with baited breath to see when the new walk-in centre that local people have been repeatedly promised will come.